

The 57th International Conference of Horseracing Authorities (ICHA) was held in Paris October 2nd 2023.

Racing in a changing Society

Winfried Engelbrecht-Bresges, Chairman of IFHA, opened the conference by reminding all Delegates that the cooperation within IFHA has helped racing throughout a demanding post covid period. IFHA, has bounced back, after a challenging pandemic period, and IFHA missions on equine welfare are more important than ever to protect our equine athletes.

In the past years, horseracing has been facing a stronger and more challenging public focus on racing activities from those who do not fully understand its benefits. Racing has continuously put efforts to enhance a better welfare and safety for our athletes to respond to the sports social expectations around the world.

To keep the initiative and secure IFHA position as a leader in the public debate and to cultivate a positive and factual impression of the sport, it is important that racing listen to useful criticism and effectively address detractors in a constructive and productive way. The sport has already responded by many innovative actions within our sport: our sport as a part of a sustainable future, climate change effect on racing and breeding and the use of modern technology.

The initiative can be secured in racing by being a leader cooperate, share knowledge and experience, be trusted, transparent, proactive, and accountable.

The keynote speaker Brian Stewart, head of Veterinary Clinical Services, HKJC: can racing enhance racehorse welfare without compromising elite athletic performance?

Racing face knowledges of the impact of catastrophic injuries on our equine welfare and this is a responsibility that racing must take seriously. The sport has to be proactive to consider amidst changing societal expectations.

The social value in racing is strong but has been challenged the last decades. The society often does not distinguish between different equestrian activities. Horseracing must be prepared to face the public's perception of horses in sport and answers questions like: Is there an acceptable injury (fatal injury rate) level in racing? and what can racing leaders do to minimalize causes?

The need for communication and consultation, widely and deeply with stakeholders and through supporting research and development, are important element to improve the safety.

The conference got updated information from Horseracing Integrity and Safety Authorities (HISA) that included implementation of anti-doping and medication control.

The answer is to share the experience from balance between racing training and rest, utilize new technology that can help us to achieve an even more accurate diagnoses and develop a tool for future management of racehorses. All this can be done thru a further highlight on education and scientific work within our sport. A "standstill" is not an option.

The ICHA was informed about the 40th Asian Racing Conference, held in Sapporo, Japan, late August 2024 under the theme. "Be connected, stride together"